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**LOAD INTERACTION EFFECTS  
ON FATIGUE CRACK GROWTH  
IN Ti-6Al-4V ALLOY**

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16. Abstract  <p>THE IMPORTANCE OF DELAY, OR RETARDATION IN THE RATE OF FATIGUE CRACK GROWTH, PRODUCED BY LOAD INTERACTIONS IN VARIABLE AMPLITUDE LOADING, ON THE ACCURATE PREDICTION OF FATIGUE LIVES OF ENGINEERING STRUCTURES HAS BEEN WELL RECOGNIZED FOR SOME TIME. HERETOFORE, ONLY A FEW SIMPLE LOADING COMBINATIONS OR SPECTRA HAVE BEEN EXAMINED SYSTEMATICALLY. IN THIS INVESTIGATION THE EFFECTS OF A BROAD RANGE OF LOADING VARIABLES ON DELAY IN FATIGUE CRACK GROWTH AT ROOM TEMPERATURE ARE EXAMINED FOR A MILL ANNEALED Ti-6Al-4V ALLOY. THE RESULTS ARE USED TO ESTIMATE CRACK GROWTH BEHAVIOR UNDER PROGRAMMED LOADS.</p>			
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# LOAD INTERACTION EFFECTS ON FATIGUE CRACK GROWTH IN Ti-6Al-4V ALLOY

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## SUMMARY

The importance of delay, or retardation in the rate of fatigue crack growth, produced by load interactions in variable amplitude loading, on the accurate prediction of fatigue lives of engineering structures has been well recognized for some time. Heretofore, only a few simple loading combinations or spectra have been examined systematically. In this investigation the effects of a broad range of loading variables on delay in fatigue crack growth at room temperature are examined for a mill annealed Ti-6Al-4V alloy. The results are used to estimate crack growth behavior under programmed loads.

## INTRODUCTION

The importance of delay (or, retardation in the rate of fatigue crack growth) produced by load interactions in variable-amplitude loading, on the accurate prediction of fatigue lives and/or inspection intervals for engineering structures has been well recognized for some time [1-3]. Heretofore, only a few simple loading combinations or spectra have been examined systematically [3-5]. In a recent exploratory study, Jonáš and Wei [6] showed that the phenomenon of delay is very complex and can depend on a broad range of loading variables. This and other investigations have shown that the effects of delay can be quite large, and need to be taken into consideration in the development of improved analysis procedures for fatigue of engineering structures [6-8].

Several models have been proposed recently to account for the effects of delay [7,8]. These models, while successful in predicting trends in fatigue crack growth under randomized load spectra, break down for ordered spectra [7]. The lack of quantitative success may be attributed to:

- (a) a lack of physical and phenomenological understanding of the effects of load interactions on fatigue crack growth [4, 6-8], and of the simpler problem of fatigue crack growth itself; and,

- (b) inadequacies in stress analysis to account for the types of loading, crack geometry, and residual stresses [9-14].

To develop the needed understanding, a systematic examination of the effects of various loading variables on delay has been carried out in this investigation. Experiments were performed within the framework of linear elastic fracture mechanics. The crack tip stress intensity factor  $K$  or  $\Delta K$  was used to characterize the mechanical crack driving force.

Delay properly refers to the period of abnormally low rate, or zero rate, of fatigue crack growth between a decrease in load level and the establishment of a rate of growth commensurate with that for constant amplitude loading at the prevailing (lower) load, that is, between points a and c in Figure 1. It is usually measured in terms of the number of elapsed load cycles. For experimental accuracy and potential engineering utility, however, it is more convenient to define delay  $N_D$  artificially as a period of zero crack growth, represented by a-b in Figure 1, which is obtained by extrapolating the constant-amplitude growth curve cd to b. Following Jonás<sup>V</sup> and Wei [6], this definition for delay will be used here.

#### LIST OF SYMBOLS

a	crack length (half-crack length in center-cracked specimens)
$\Delta a/\Delta N$	rate of fatigue crack growth
K	stress intensity factor
$K_{\max}$	maximum value of K in one cycle
$K_{\min}$	minimum value of K in one cycle
$\Delta K = K_{\max} - K_{\min}$	stress intensity range
N	number of cycles
$N_D$	delay, in number of cycles (see Figure 1)
$R = K_{\min}/K_{\max}$	stress ratio
t	time at load
1, 2	subscripts 1 and 2 denote preloading (high load excursion) and subsequent loading conditions respectively

## MATERIAL AND EXPERIMENTAL WORK

A 0.2-inch-thick (5.08 mm) mill annealed Ti-6Al-4V alloy plate was used in this investigation. The chemical composition, and longitudinal and transverse tensile properties of this alloy are given in Table 1. Constant load-amplitude fatigue crack growth data in several test environments are shown in Figure 2 for reference.

Three-inch-wide (76.2 mm) by 16-inch-long (406 mm) center-cracked specimens, oriented in the long transverse (TL) direction, were used in the fatigue crack growth studies. The initial center notch, about 0.4 inch (about 10 mm) long, was introduced by electro-discharge machining (EDM). The specimens were precracked in air at a stress ratio  $R$  of 0.05 through a sequence of loads that reduced  $\Delta K$  to a level that is equal to or less than the selected starting  $\Delta K$  level for the actual experiments. This precracking procedure provided fatigue cracks of about 0.08 inch (about 2 mm) in length from the ends of the starter notches, such that subsequent fatigue crack growth will be through material that has not been altered by the notch preparation procedure and will be unaffected by the starter notch geometry.

Delay experiments were carried out in air\* under axial loading in a 100,000-lb. capacity MTS Systems closed-loop electro-hydraulic testing machine operated principally at 5 Hz. Deviations from this loading frequency were made when a single or a small number of high load cycles were to be applied, and when extremely long delays were experienced. Load control was estimated to be better than  $\pm 1$  percent. A continuous-recording electrical potential system was used for monitoring crack growth [15,16]. Using a working current of about 2.1 amperes, this system provided an average measurement sensitivity of about 0.0025 inch (0.064 mm) in half-crack length, a, per microvolt ( $\mu v$ ) change in potential (that is, 0.0025 in./ $\mu v$  or 0.064 mm/ $\mu v$ ) for these specimens. Resolution was better than 0.0015 inch (0.038 mm). The electrical potential method provides measurements of the average crack length (through the

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\* Comparison experiments indicated that delay in air was not significantly different from that obtained in a dehumidified argon environment. For convenience, therefore, all delay experiments were carried out in air. Aggressive environments, such as salt water, and test temperature, however, have significant effects on delay. These effects will be discussed in a separate paper.

thickness), as opposed to the visual methods which give measurements of the crack length at the specimen surface only. Hence, this method can detect the onset of crack growth from the mid-thickness region of the specimens, that is, crack tunneling.

Because previous experiments [6] indicated the existence of a significant effect on delay when a high load excursion occurred during delay produced by a previous high load excursion, a series of experiments was conducted to establish proper test conditions for this investigation. The results of these experiments are shown in Figure 3. For example, a single high load excursion to  $28 \text{ ksi-in}^{\frac{1}{2}}$  followed by cycling at a  $\Delta K_2$  of  $14 \text{ ksi-in}^{\frac{1}{2}}$  resulted in a delay,  $N_D$ , of about 7,000 cycles. The introduction of a second high load excursion of the same magnitude immediately after the first excursion increased  $N_D$  by about 4,000 cycles to about 11,000 cycles. By increasing the interval between the high load excursions,  $N_D$  is increased by lesser amounts, and returns to that of a single high load excursion after the crack had been extended by about 0.085 inch (2.16 mm) between the successive high load excursions, Figure 3. Such a procedure was utilized in this investigation, and permitted an average of five individual delay experiments to be performed on each test specimen.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In an exploratory investigation, Jonáš<sup>v</sup> and Wei [6] found that delay,  $N_D$ , was a function of  $\Delta K_1$ ,  $\Delta K_2$  (or  $\Delta K_1/\Delta K_2$ ),  $R_1$ ,  $N_1$  and  $t_1$ , where the subscripts 1 and 2 denote preloading and the subsequent loading conditions respectively.  $\Delta K$  is the stress intensity range for a given loading cycle (that is  $\Delta K = K_{\max} - K_{\min}$ );  $R = K_{\min}/K_{\max}$ ;  $N$  = the number of load cycles; and  $t$  = time at load.

$$N_D = F [\Delta K_1, \Delta K_2 \text{ (or } \Delta K_1/\Delta K_2), R_1, R_2, N_1, t_1]$$

Other studies showed that delay depends also on the test temperatures  $T_1$  and  $T_2$ , and on the test environment. The effects of these environmental variables will be discussed in a separate paper. In this investigation, a more systematic examination of the influences of  $\Delta K_1$ ,  $\Delta K_2$ ,  $R_1$ ,  $R_2$  and  $N_1$  was made. For the sake of completeness, the results of the exploratory study are included in Figure 4, and will be discussed along with the results from this investigation.

The effects of a broad range of loading variables are shown in Figures 4 to 11, and may be summarized below:

1. Comparison of Figures 4(a) and 4(b) shows that relaxation at zero load following a high load excursion decreases delay [6].
2. Comparisons between Figures 4(b), 4(c) and 4(d), and between Figures 4(g) and 4(h) show that holding at high load increases delay. Delay is increased with increasing time at load,  $t_1$  [6].
3. Comparison of Figure 4(f) with Figure 4(g) shows that delay is a minimum when compression loading is applied following a high load excursion [6].
4. For fixed values of  $\Delta K_2$  (or  $\Delta K_1$ ), delay depends strongly on  $\Delta K_1$  (or  $\Delta K_2$ ) or on the ratio between  $\Delta K_1$  and  $\Delta K_2$ , Figure 5. This effect can be very large. For example, loading at a  $\Delta K_2$  of about  $10 \text{ ksi-in}^{\frac{1}{2}}$  ( $11 \text{ MN-m}^{-3/2}$ ) (with  $R \approx 0$ ), following a single high load excursion to  $28 \text{ ksi-in}^{\frac{1}{2}}$  ( $30.8 \text{ MN-m}^{-3/2}$ ), (that is,  $\Delta K_1/\Delta K_2 = 2.8$ ), produced no detectable crack growth after 450,000 cycles, indicating a delay of much greater than 450,000 cycles, Figure 5(b). (The normal rate of fatigue crack growth under this condition would have been of the order of  $10^{-6}$  inch per cycle.)
5. By increasing  $\Delta K_2$  to  $14 \text{ ksi-in}^{\frac{1}{2}}$  ( $15.4 \text{ MN-m}^{-3/2}$ ) after 450,000 cycles at a  $\Delta K_2$  of  $10 \text{ ksi-in}^{\frac{1}{2}}$  ( $11 \text{ MN-m}^{-3/2}$ ), (in the loading sequence described in item 4 above), a delay of 6,500 cycles was observed. This delay is consistent with those obtained for a direct change in loading from 28 to  $14 \text{ ksi-in}^{\frac{1}{2}}$  ( $30.8$  to  $15.4 \text{ MN-m}^{-3/2}$ ), Figure 5(a). This result suggests that delay is substantially unaffected by intermediate cyclic loading during which no crack growth takes place.
6. For a constant value of  $\Delta K_1/\Delta K_2$ , delay decreases with increasing  $\Delta K_2$ , Figures 6 and 7.
7. For fixed values of  $\Delta K_1$  and  $\Delta K_2$ , delay decreases with increasing  $R_2$ , and coincidentally with increasing values of  $K_{2\text{max}}/K_{1\text{max}}$ . When  $K_{2\text{max}}$  is equal to (or exceeds)  $K_{1\text{max}}$ , no delay will be experienced, Figures 8 and 9.
8. When a high load excursion occurs during delay produced by a previous high load excursion, the resulting delay appears to depend on the interval, or



extent of crack growth, between the high load excursions, Figures 2 and 4. Delay is increased by the proximity to the first high load excursion and decreases with crack extension between the high load excursions. The extent of crack growth required to eliminate the effect of the first high load excursion appears to be an order of magnitude larger than the crack tip plastic zone size,  $r_{y1}$ , Figure 2, and is expected to be dependent on the test temperature and loading history.

9. Delay increases with the number of repeated high load excursions,  $N_1$ , Figure 10. Unlike the results of Hudson and Raju [4], however, it reaches a maximum and then decreases with increasing  $N_1$ . The results suggest that this maximum may be dependent on  $R_1$ , among other possible variables.
10. The effect of  $R_1$  was not examined specifically. By cross plotting available data, however, it may be seen that delay is strongly affected by  $R_1$  also, Figure 11. The behavior appears to be more complex and to be dependent on the number of high load cycles.

It is clear that delay in fatigue crack growth caused by load interactions is a highly complex phenomenon. No satisfactory model has been developed to account for all of the observed behavior [7, 8]. The results of this investigation suggest that residual stress at the crack tip would play an important role in delaying crack growth. Observation on an interrupted test\* indicates that the reinitiation of fatigue crack growth, following a high load excursion, proceeds from the mid-thickness region of a specimen, Figure 12. This observation suggests that delay is caused primarily by residual stresses introduced by plastic deformation at the specimen surface, and that delay, in essence, is a three dimensional problem.

To examine the implications of delay on fatigue crack growth under variable-amplitude loading, experiments were carried out using simple block programming. A simple 4-layer (or, 4 load level) block spectrum was used. Loads were selected to give  $\Delta K$  levels of approximately 12, 16, 20 and 24 ksi-in<sup>1/2</sup> (13.2, 17.6, 22 and 26.4 MN-m<sup>-3/2</sup>); with  $R = 0$  and with 6,000, 1,200, 600 and 300 cycles in the respective layers. Both a

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\* Tested in air at 560°F.

low-to-high and a high-to-low sequence were examined. Cumulative crack growth after each layer for each of the spectra is given in Table 2. These results are compared with estimates computed on the basis of the definition of delay (Figure 1) and the delay and crack growth data (Figures 2 to 11). (The estimation procedure is given in the Appendix). It is seen that the spectrum load data are consistent with the estimated results, and therefore consistent with the delay data (although the close agreement indicated in Table 2 may be somewhat fortuitous, it is representative of the general behavior). In the low-to-high sequence, there is no delay in the first load block since the loads appeared in ascending order. In the first layer of the second block, and of subsequent blocks, nearly no crack growth took place because of delay. Some crack growth occurred in the second layer of the second and subsequent load blocks, since the number of applied cycles was larger than the delay. Because of growth in the second layer, little or no delay would be expected in the third layer; and no delay occurred in the fourth and final layer in each block. In the high-to-low sequence, on the other hand, no delay occurred in the first (highest load) layer in each block. Delay and some crack growth occurred in each of the succeeding layers, such that delay in each layer is affected only by the previous layer. Because of these differences, a sequence effect occurred, such as those reported in the literature [7].

## CONCLUSION

A phenomenological examination of delay, or retardation in the rate of fatigue crack growth, produced by load interactions was made. The delay phenomenon was found to be very complex and to be strongly dependent on all of the loading variables, such as stress intensity range, stress ratio, number of cycles of high load, time at high load, etc. Estimates based on the phenomenological data on delay indicate the presence of a sequence effect for programmed loading. These estimates are consistent with experimental observations. These results suggest that a consistent phenomenological model for estimating fatigue crack growth under variable-amplitude loading can be developed.

## APPENDIX

### Procedure for Estimating Crack Growth under Programmed Loading

A numerical integration procedure was used for estimating fatigue crack growth under programmed loading. This procedure utilized piece-wise power law representations of the constant load-amplitude fatigue crack growth data, and delay data from the experimental program. A power law of the following form was used:

$$\frac{\Delta a}{\Delta N} = A (\Delta K)^n \quad (A-1)$$

where A and n are empirical constants. For  $\Delta a/\Delta N$  and  $\Delta K$  to be expressed in units of in./cycle and ksi-in<sup>1/2</sup> respectively, the empirical constant A assumes the dimension of (in./cycle) (ksi-in<sup>1/2</sup>)<sup>-n</sup>. The following values of A and n were used (air data from Figure 2, with R ≈ 0):

$$\begin{aligned} \text{For } \Delta K < 14 \text{ ksi-in}^{\frac{1}{2}} \quad n = 3.6 \quad A = 3.38 \times 10^{-10} (\text{in./cycle}) (\text{ksi-in}^{\frac{1}{2}})^{-3.6} \\ \text{For } \Delta K \geq 14 \text{ ksi-in}^{\frac{1}{2}} \quad n = 2.6 \quad A = 5.18 \times 10^{-9} (\text{in./cycle}) (\text{ksi-in}^{\frac{1}{2}})^{-2.6} \end{aligned}$$

Delay data for a single high load excursion was estimated from Figures 5-7, and are shown in Figure A-1. (Approximate adjustments were made to account for multiple high load excursions as required.) Procedurally, delay encountered in the i<sup>th</sup> load layer, N<sub>Di</sub>, was estimated on the basis of  $\Delta K$  at the start of the i<sup>th</sup> layer,  $\Delta K_i$ , and  $\Delta K$  at the end of the previous layer,  $\Delta K_{(i-1)}$ . The increment of crack growth during the i<sup>th</sup> layer was determined numerically by integrating Equation A-1 between N<sub>Di</sub> and N<sub>i</sub>, where N<sub>i</sub> = total number of cycles in the i<sup>th</sup> layer. Integration was performed only when N<sub>i</sub> exceeded N<sub>Di</sub>. If no crack growth took place during the (i - 1)<sup>th</sup> layer, N<sub>Di</sub> was estimated on the basis of the next previous layer, that is, the (i - 2) layer. A more detailed discussion of the steps used in obtaining the results in Table 2 is given below.

Two indices j - k were used to designate the load-block (j) and load-layer (k) in the block programmed load used in Table 2. In the low-to-high sequence, no delay would be encountered in the 1-1, 1-2, 1-3 and 1-4 layers, since the loads appeared in ascending order. Cumulative crack growth was calculated straight-forwardly from Equation A-1. For the 2-1 and 3-1 layers, delay was estimated to be about 12,000 cycles.

This value was estimated from Figure A-1 for a single high load excursion, and was adjusted approximately for multiple high load excursions on the basis of Figure 10 by proportion. Since the delay was larger than the number of applied load cycles in these layers, no crack growth was obtained. Since crack growth did not take place during the 2-1 and 3-1 layers, estimates for delay in the 2-2 and 3-2 layers were based on comparisons of  $\Delta K$  levels in the 1-4 and 2-2, and 2-4 and 3-2 layers respectively. Delay in these layers was estimated to be about 1,000 cycles. Because of the delay, crack growth was assumed to be zero during the first 1,000 cycles in these layers. Crack growth during the remaining 200 cycles was then calculated by integration of Equation A-1. Because of crack growth in the 2-2 and 3-2 layers, the high loads in the 1-4 and 2-4 layers were assumed to exert no further influence on the subsequent layers, that is, the 2-3 and 2-4, and 3-3 and 3-4 layers, respectively. Crack growth in each layer was then calculated straight-forwardly. Crack growth for the high-to-low sequence was estimated in a similar manner.

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TABLE 1

Chemical Composition and Tensile Properties  
(Reactive Metal Ingot No. 293831, Lot 05)

Chemical Composition - Weight Percent  
(Ingot Analysis)

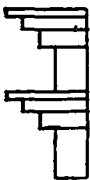
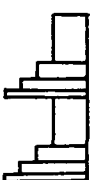
<u>C</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Fe</u>	<u>Al</u>	<u>V</u>	<u>O</u>	<u>H (ppm)</u>	<u>Ti</u>
0.03	0.013	0.13	6.2	4.2	0.12	90	Balance

Tensile Properties\*

<u>Direction</u>	<u>Yield Strength</u> <u>ksi (MN/m<sup>2</sup>)</u>	<u>Tensile</u> <u>Strength</u> <u>ksi (MN/m<sup>2</sup>)</u>	<u>Elongation</u> <u>in 2 in.</u> <u>percent</u>
Transverse			
	149.5 (1,031)	152.6 (1,052)	12.5
	149.8 (1,033)	153.4 (1,058)	12.5
	<u>148.3 (1,023)</u>	<u>151.4 (1,044)</u>	<u>11.7</u>
(Average)	149.2 (1,029)	152.5 (1,051)	12.2
Longitudinal			
	-----	150.7 (1,039)	11.7
	141.1 (973)	151.0 (1,041)	11.7
	<u>141.9 (978)</u>	<u>151.8 (1,047)</u>	<u>12.5</u>
(Average)	141.5 (976)	151.2 (1,042)	12.0

\* Production annealed 1,450°F, 15 min. + air cool.

Table 2: Comparison of Estimated and Measured Crack Growth under Block Programmed Loads ( $R = 0$ ;  $f = 5.0$  Hz) in Air at Room Temperature

Sequence	Block No.	Layer No.	Load* (lbs)	No. of Cycles	Est. Delay (Cycles)	Cumulative Crack Growth (in.)**	
						Measured	Estimated
Low-High  ( $a_o = 0.6019$ )  	1	1	5,220	6,000	0	(Not Included)	---
		2	6,960	1,200	0	0.0077	0.009
		3	8,700	600	0	0.0155	0.018
		4	10,420	300	0	0.0227	0.024
	2	1	5,220	6,000	12,000	0.0230	0.024
		2	6,960	1,200	1,000	0.0248	0.026
		3	8,700	600	0	0.0323	0.035
		4	10,420	300	0	0.0398	0.042
	3	1	5,220	6,000	12,000	0.0399	0.042
		2	6,960	1,200	1,000	0.0421	0.044
		3	8,700	600	0	0.0503	0.053
		4	10,420	300	0	0.0582	0.061
High-Low  ( $a_o = 0.7414$ )  	1	1	8,800	300	0	0.0061	0.006
		2	7,330	600	150	0.0118	0.012
		3	5,870	1,200	500	0.0173	0.017
		4	4,400	6,000	1,500	0.0303	0.031
	2	1	8,800	300	0	0.0371	0.038
		2	7,330	600	150	0.0434	0.044
		3	5,870	1,200	500	0.0499	0.050
		4	4,400	6,000	1,500	0.0643	0.065
	3	1	8,800	300	0	0.0724	0.073
		2	7,330	600	150	0.0794	0.080
		3	5,870	1,200	500	0.0865	0.087
		4	4,400	6,000	1,500	0.1024	0.105

\* 1 lb.  $\approx$  4.448 N

\*\* 1 in. =  $2.54 \times 10^{-2}$  m

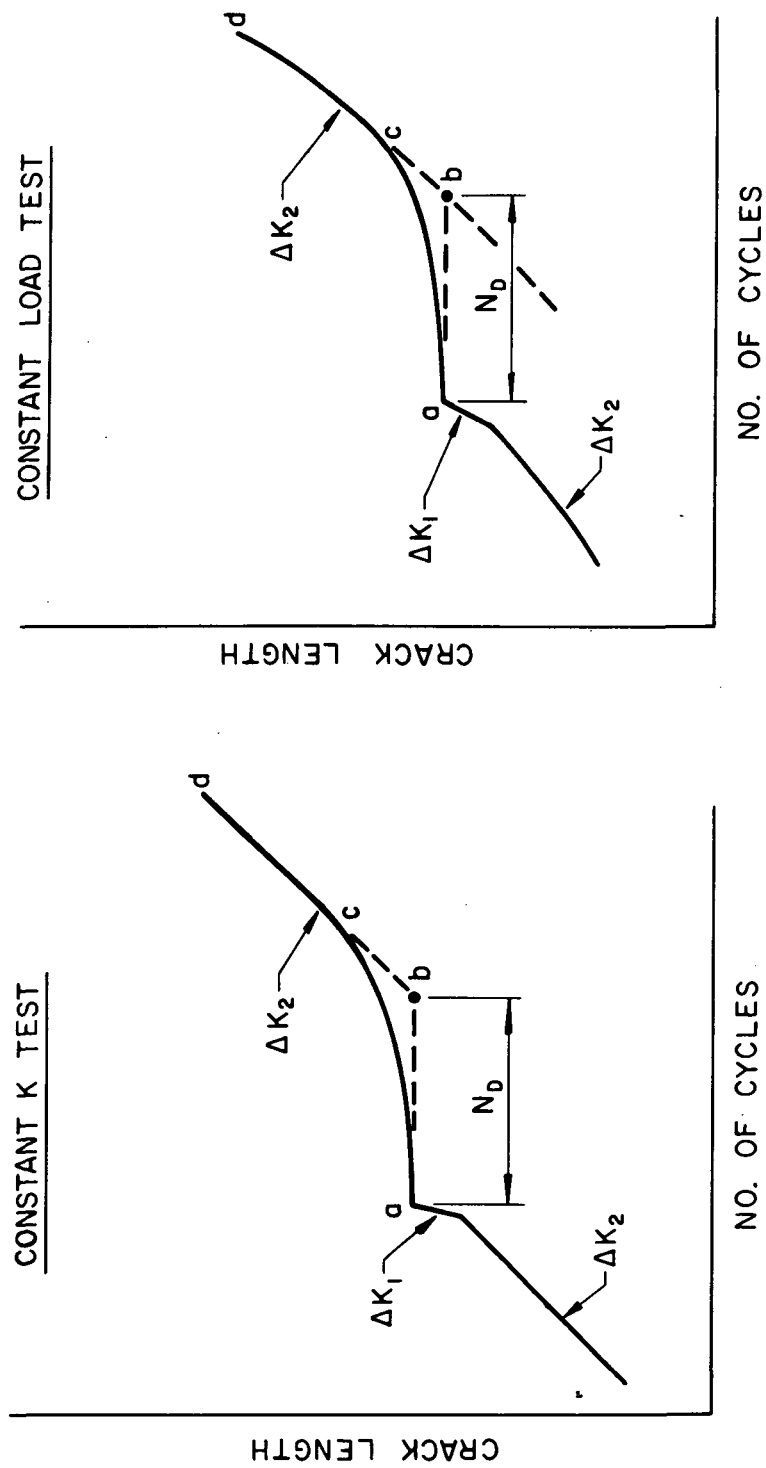


Figure 1: Schematic Illustration of Delay in Fatigue Crack Growth and Definition of  $N_D$  [6].



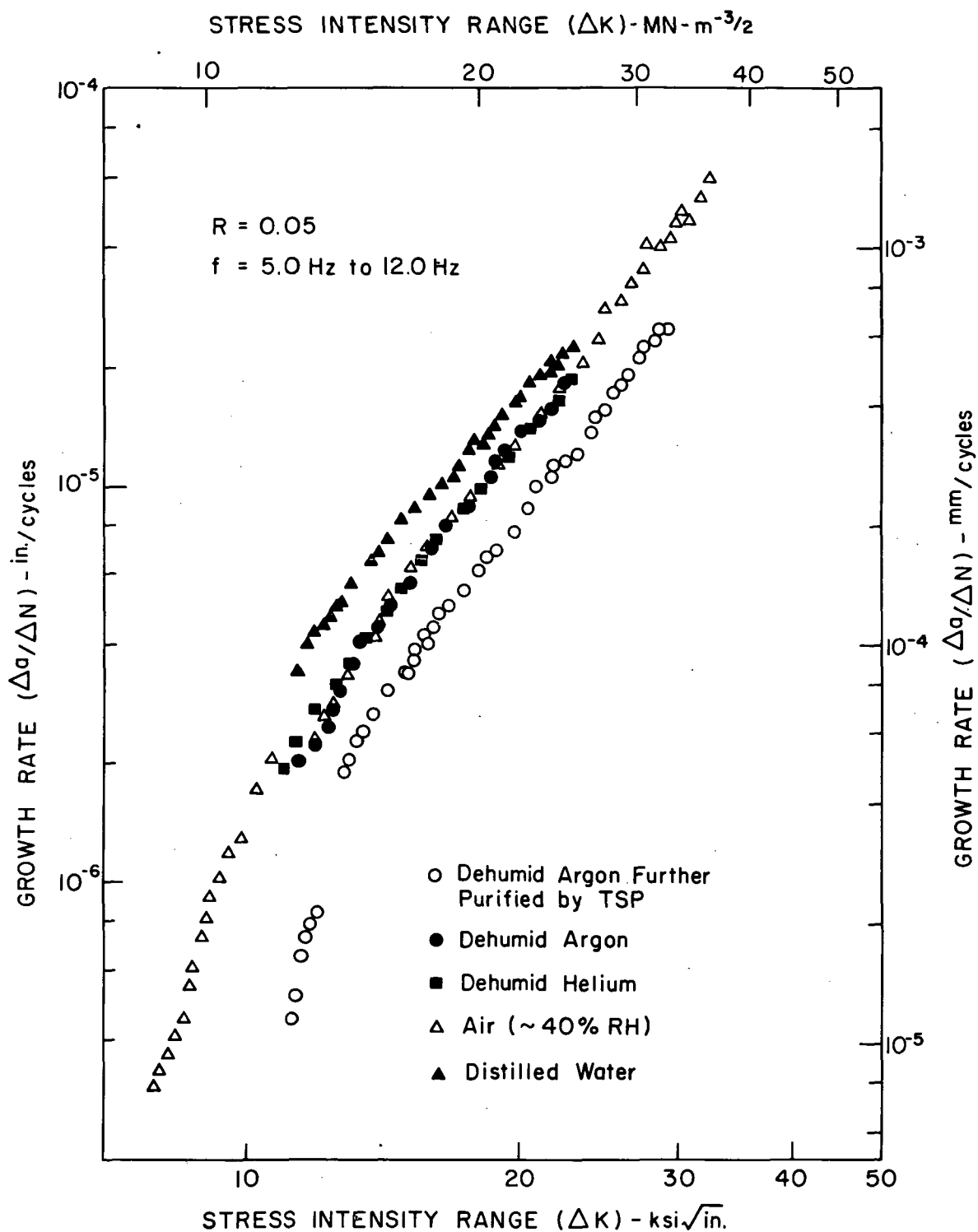


Figure 2: Kinetics of Fatigue Crack Growth in Various Environments at Room Temperature. (Residual moisture in the dehumidified environments were well below 30 ppm [17] ).

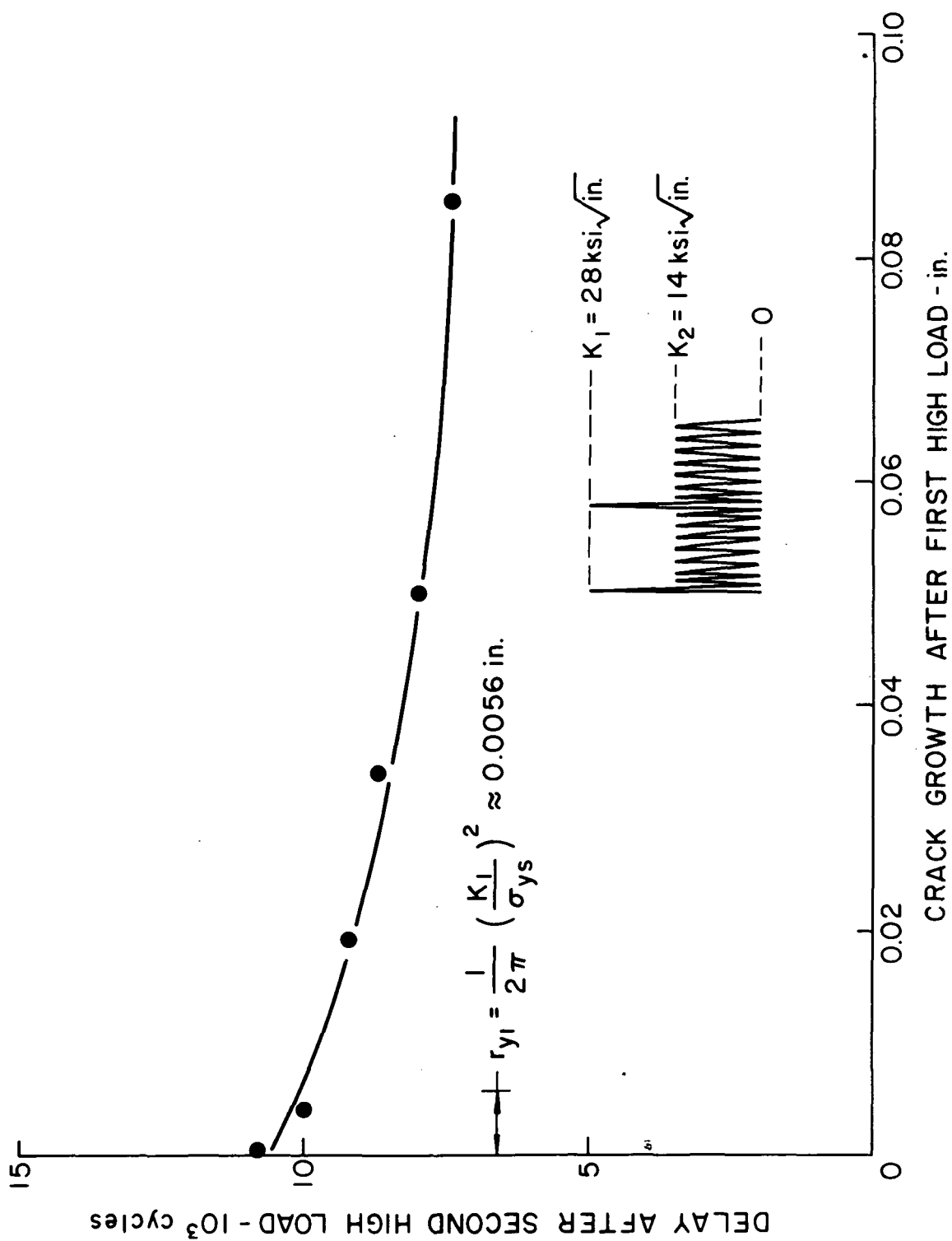


Figure 3: Effect of Crack Growth between Consecutive High Load Excursions on the Subsequent Delay.

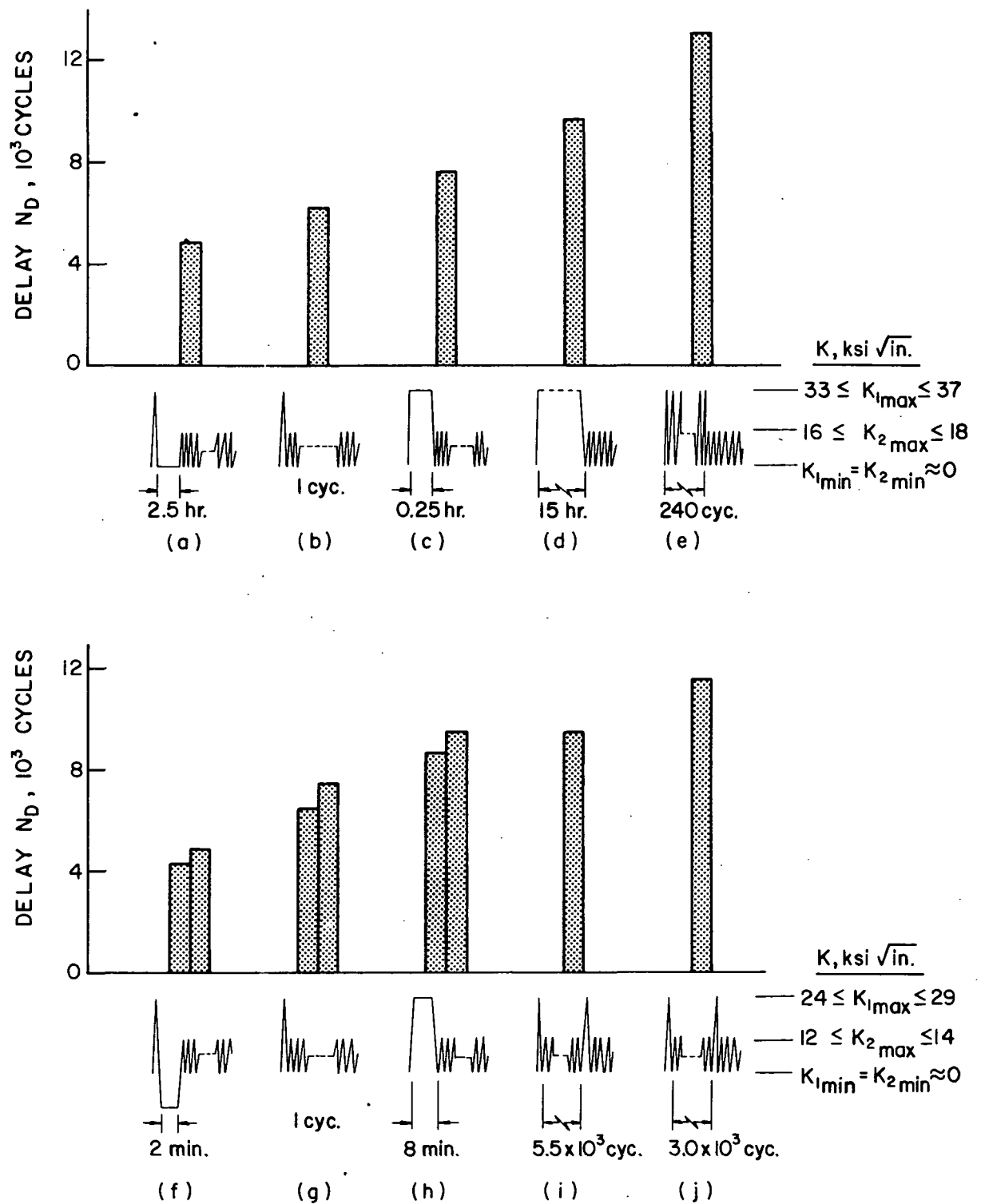


Figure 4: Delay in Fatigue Crack Growth Produced by Various Simple Load Sequences [6]. (Each bar represents an individual data point).

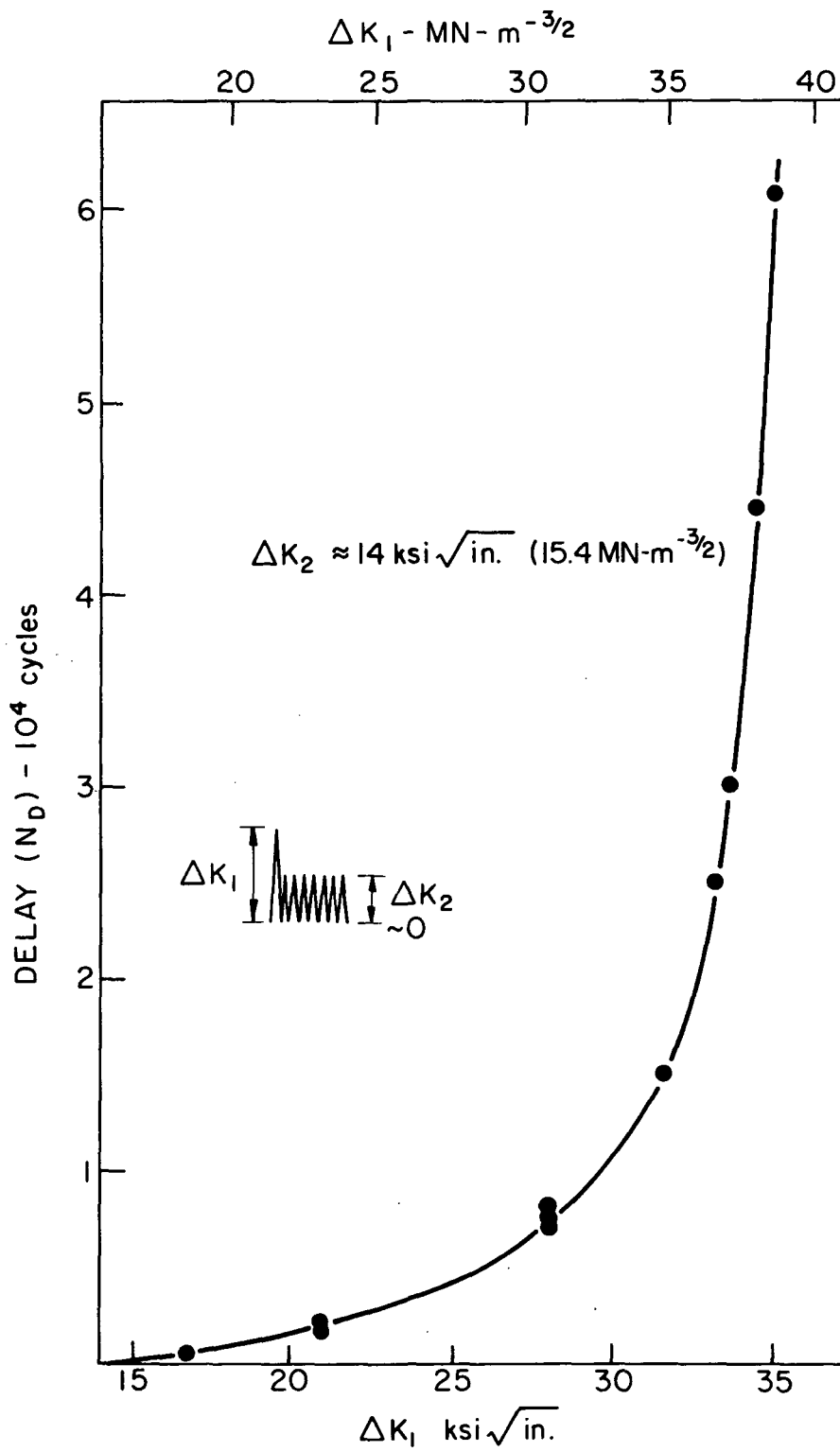


Figure 5a: Effect of  $\Delta K_I$  on Delay

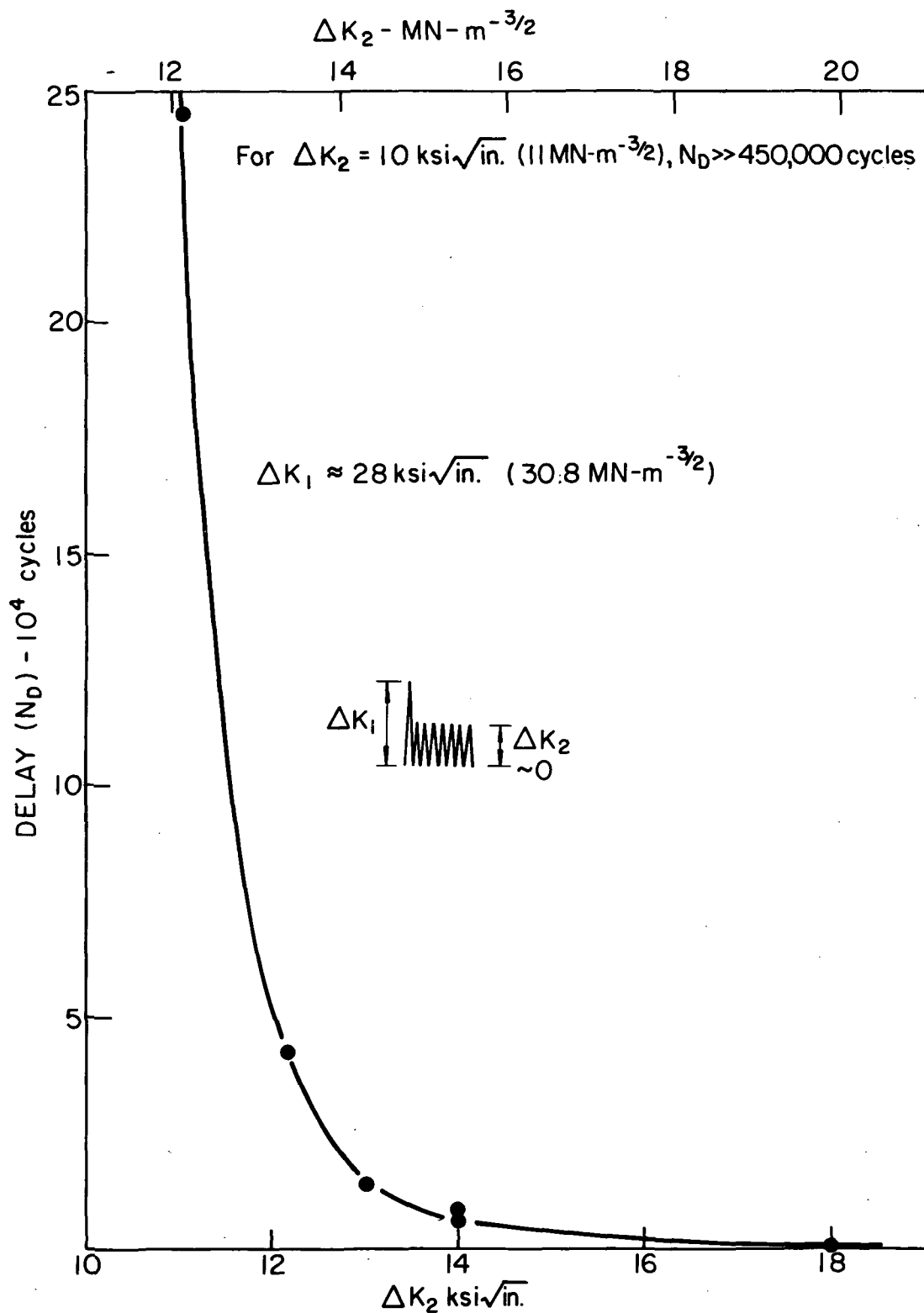


Figure 5b: Effect of  $\Delta K_2$  on Delay

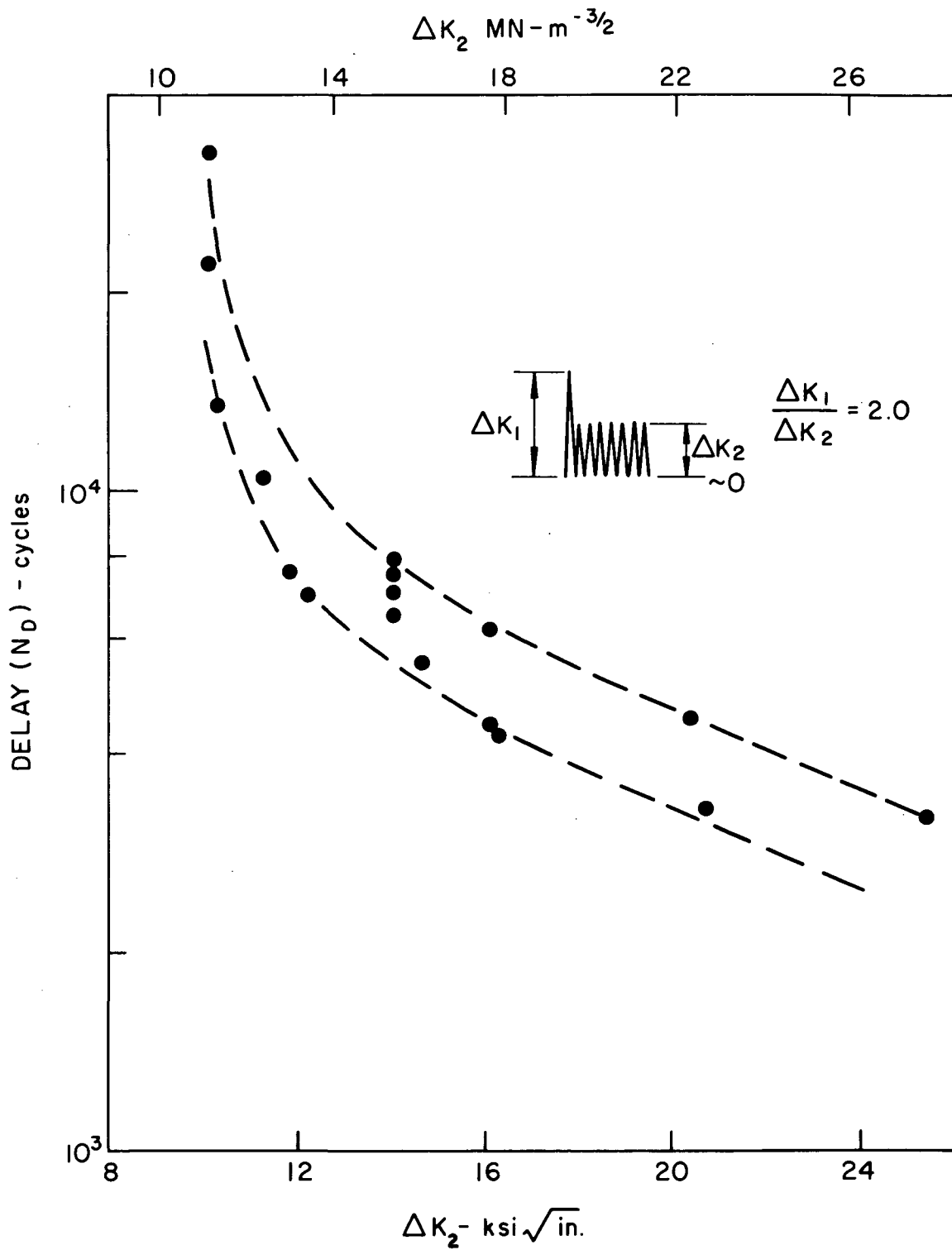


Figure 6: Effect of  $\Delta K_2$  on Delay for  $\Delta K_1 / \Delta K_2 = 2.0$ .

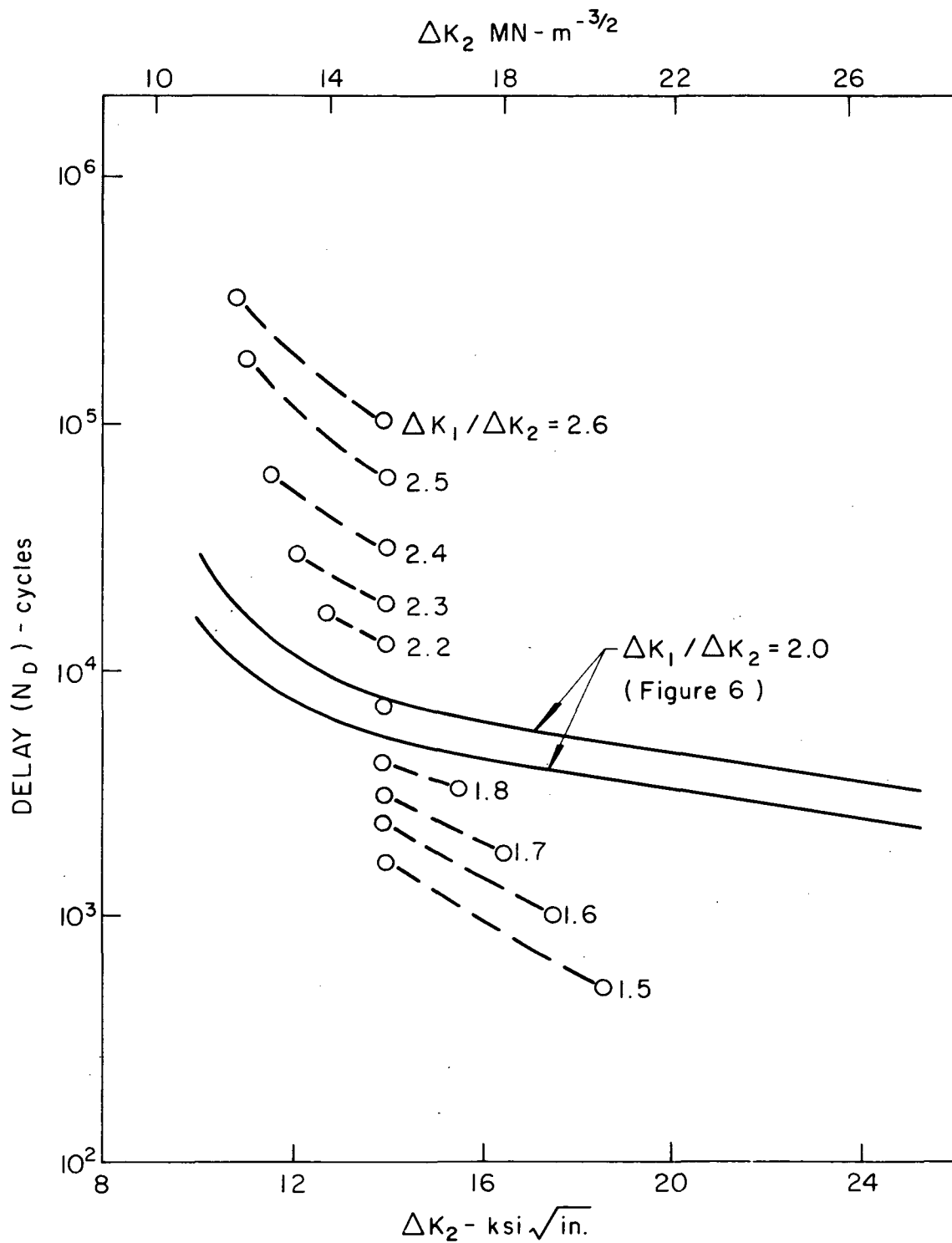


Figure 7: Effect of  $\Delta K_2$  on Delay for Constant  $\Delta K_1 / \Delta K_2$ .

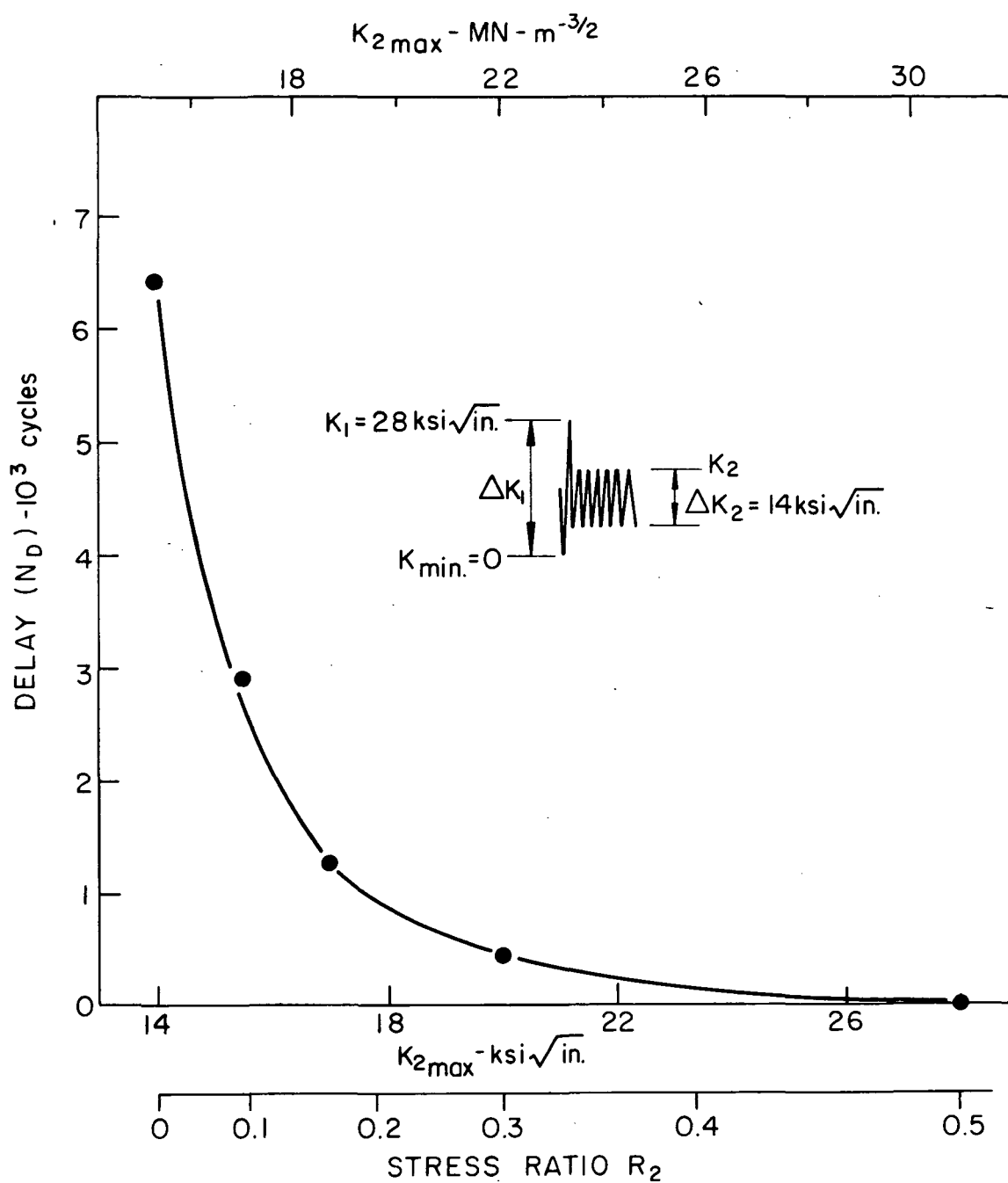


Figure 8: Effect of  $R_2$  or  $K_{2\max}$  on Delay.



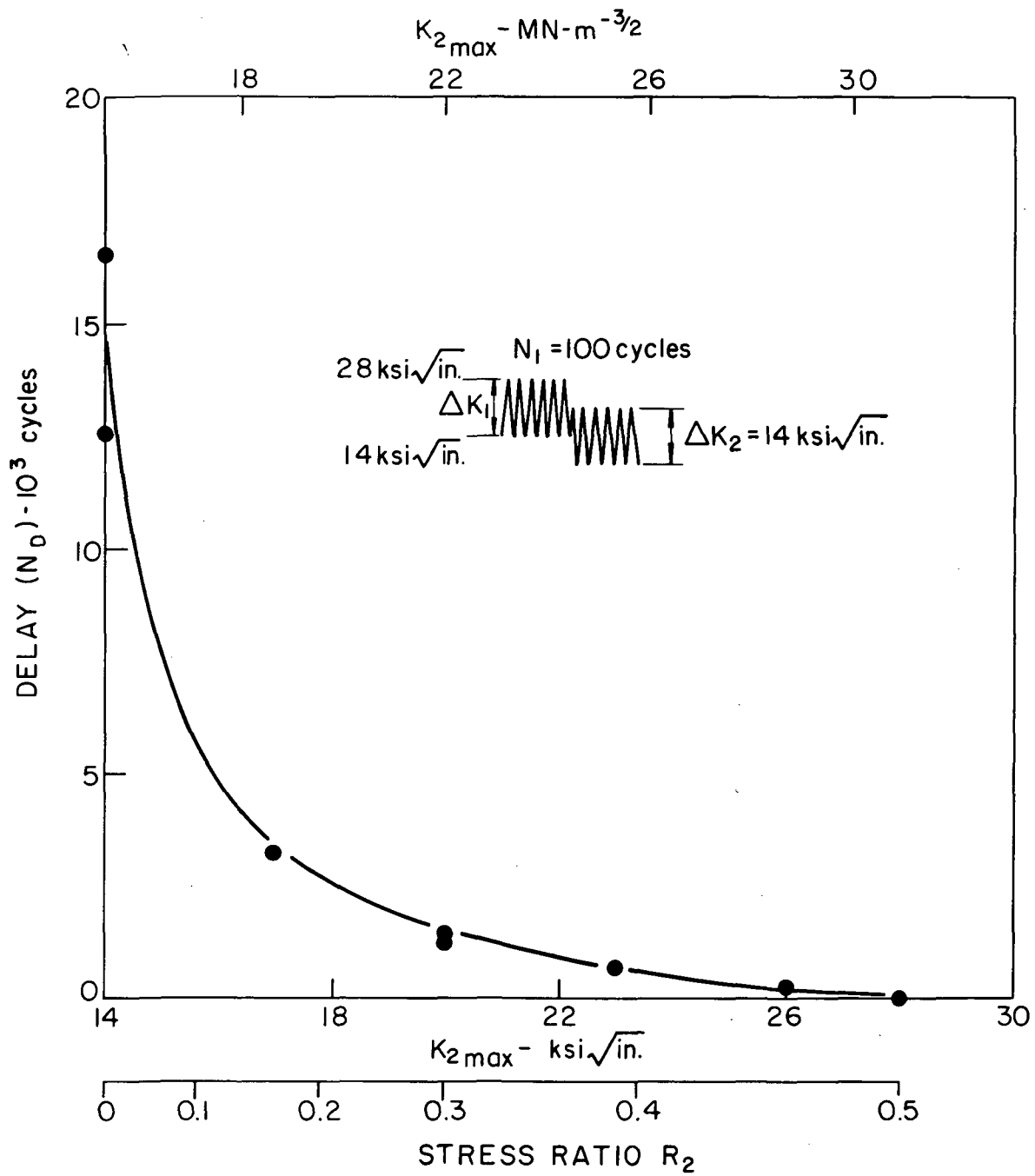


Figure 9: Effect of  $R_2$  or  $K_{2\max}$  on Delay.

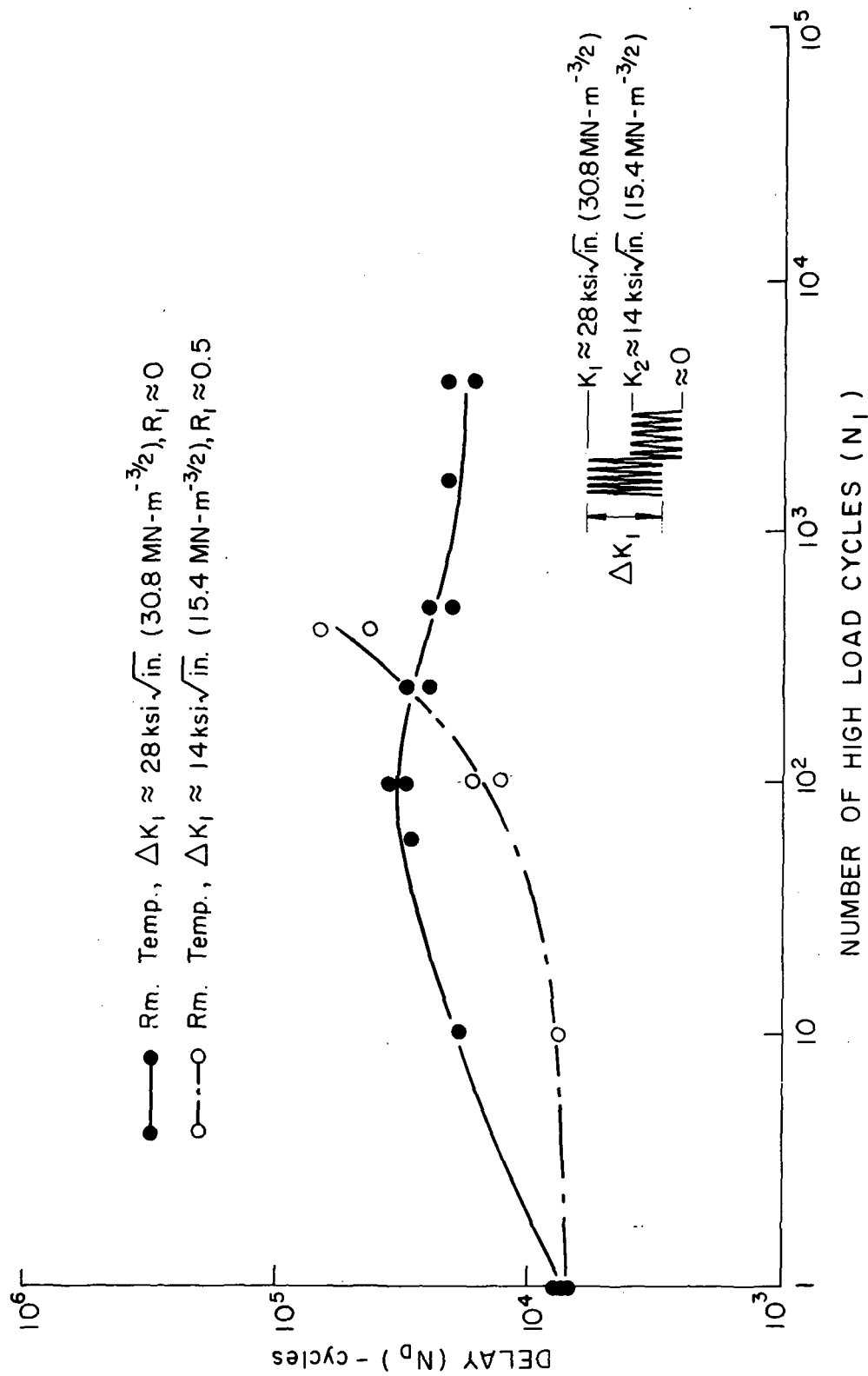


Figure 10: Effect of Multiple High Load Excursions on Delay.

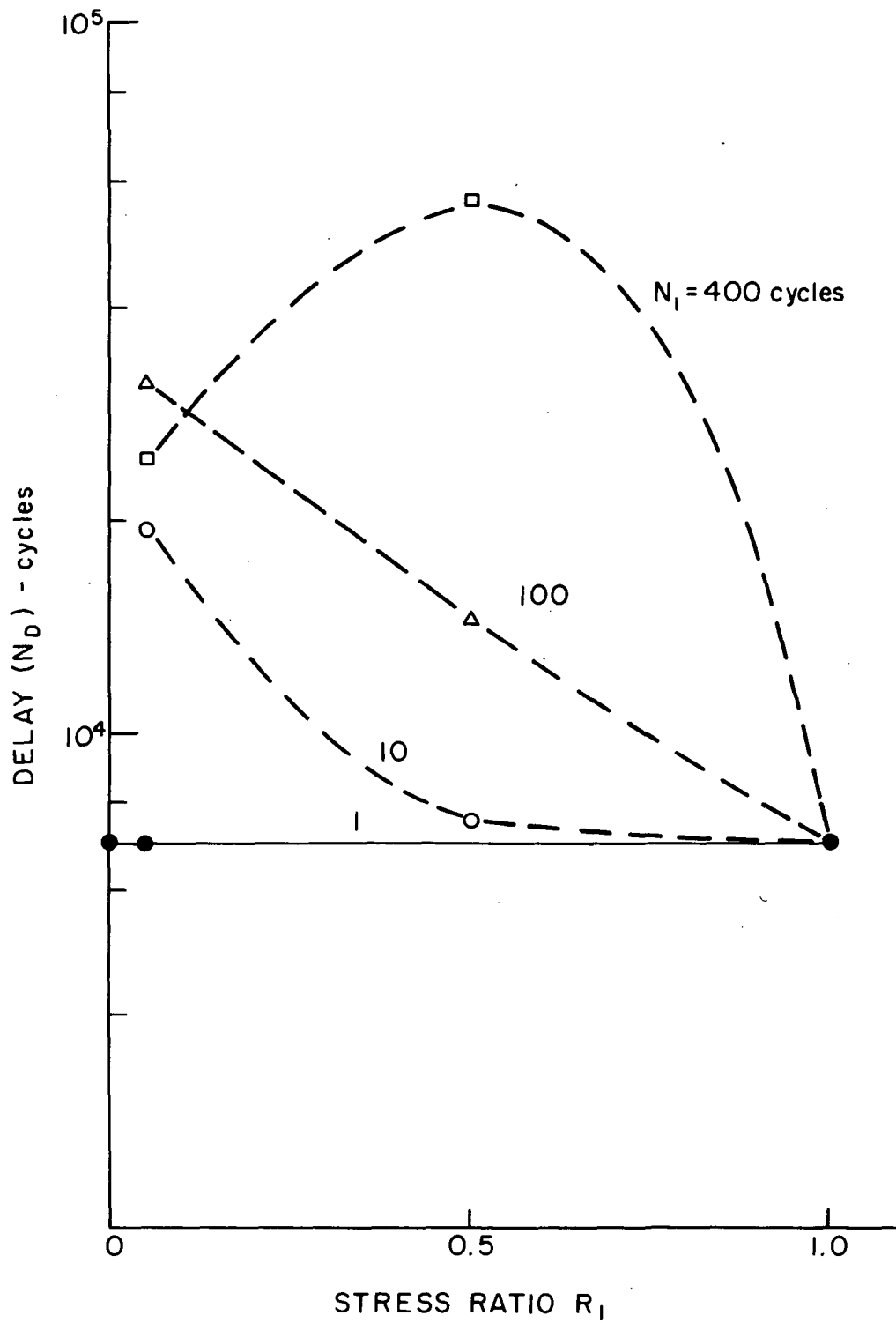


Figure 11: Effects of  $R_1$  and  $N_1$  on Delay.



**Figure 12: Macrofractograph Showing Onset of Crack Growth from the Mid-Thickness Region Following a High Load Excursion at A.**

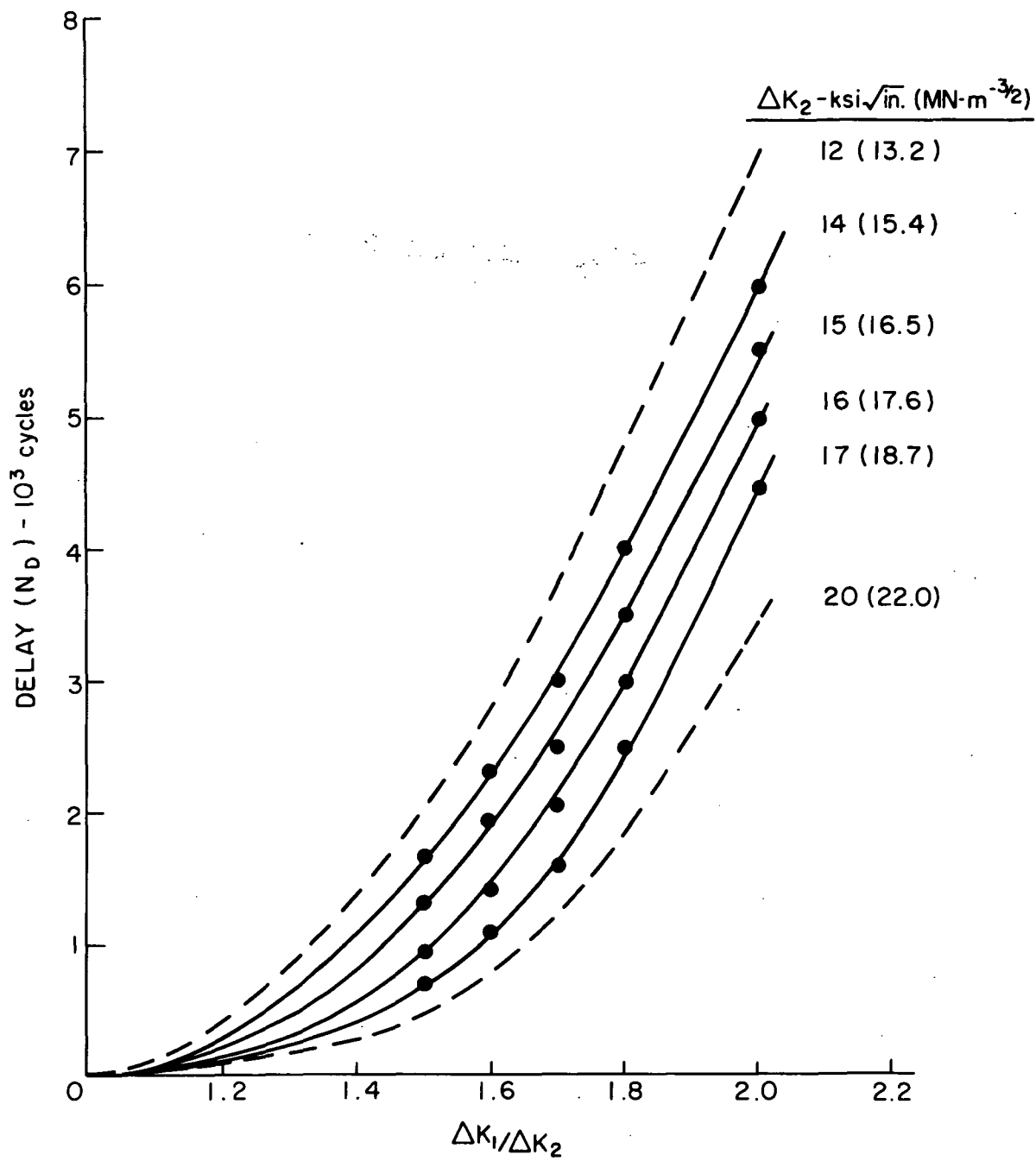


Figure A-1: Effect of  $\Delta K_1 / \Delta K_2$  on Delay.

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—NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ACT OF 1958

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